

Documents on Diplomacy: The Source

A Matter not Ripe for Decision A Dispatch from G. M. Dallas to Secretary Seward, Legation of the United States, London, April 9, 1861

Sir: Referring to my dispatch of the 5th instant, (No. 329), I have now the honor to state that Lord John Russell accorded me an interview at the foreign office yesterday, and enabled me to submit fully to his consideration the representation of your circular, with the inaugural address of the President.

We conversed for some time on the question of recognizing the alleged southern confederacy, of which no representative has yet appeared, and may not appear until the end of the month.

His lordship assured me with great earnestness that there was not the slightest disposition in the British government to grasp at any advantage which might be supposed to arise from the unpleasant domestic difficulties in the United States, but, on the contrary, that they would be highly gratified if those differences were adjusted and the Union restored to its former unbroken position.

I pressed upon him, in concluding, if that were the case—and I was quite convinced that it was—how important it must be that this country and France should abstain, at least for a considerable

time, from doing what, by encouraging groundless hopes, would widen a breach still thought capable of being closed.

He seemed to think the matter not ripe for decision one way or the other, and remarked that what he had said was all that at present it was in his power to say. The coming of my successor, Mr. Adams, looked for from week to week, would doubtless be regarded as the appropriate and natural occasion for finally discussing and determining the question. In the intermediate time whatever of vigilance and activity may be necessary shall, of course, and as a high duty, be exerted.

English opinion tends rather, I apprehend, to the theory that a peaceful separation may work beneficially for both groups of States and not injuriously affect the rest of the world. They cannot be expected to appreciate the weakness, discredit, complications, and dangers which we instinctively and justly ascribe to disunion. . . .

I have the honor to be, sir, your most obedient servant,

G.M. DALLAS

Source

United States Department of State, *Message of the President of the United States to the two houses of Congress, at the commencement of the second session of the thirty-seventh congress*, Vol. I [Washington, D.C.: 1861]

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